

PROOFS
OF
PROVIDENCE
AND
DIVINE PROTECTION.

A
SERMON,
PREACHED AT
GROSVENOR CHAPEL,
ON NOVEMBER 29, 1798.

THE DAY OF
PUBLIC THANKSGIVING
FOR THE SUCCESS OF HIS MAJESTY'S ARMS,
By the Rev. Dr. CLARKE,
SECRETARY FOR THE LIBRARY, AND CHAPLAIN
IN ORDINARY TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES.

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late DOCTOR SAMUEL CLARKE.

with the son of the Rev. Dr. Clarke's personal property

THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

DICTIONARY OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

OF THE UNITED STATES

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF HARDWICKE,
LORD LIEUTENANT
AND
CUSTOS ROTULORUM
OF THE COUNTY OF CAMBRIDGE,
&c. &c. &c.

THIS DISCOURSE
IS

WITH THE HIGHEST RESPECT
FOR HIS VIRTUES
AND
A LIVELY GRATITUDE FOR HIS
CONDESCENSION
INSCRIBED

BY
HIS LORDSHIP'S MOST HUMBLE
OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

SOME Gentleman has caused to be Republished an excellent Sermon, preached by the celebrated DR. SAMUEL CLARKE before the HOUSE of COMMONS in 1709, on a Day of Thanksgiving for the Success of the Arms of Her Majesty Queen Anne.

The well judged motives, assigned for the Republication ~~of that~~ are to display the great general analogy between the blessings afforded to this Country at that period and the present day.

In order therefore to add a link to this great chain, the following Discourse is respectfully submitted to the Public. Its object is to shew, that amidst the wrecks of war and all the shocks of the Moral world to day, THERE IS A PROVIDENCE, not only Universal, but Particular. BRITAIN still stands upon the same proud eminence, under Almighty protection,

THE AUTHOR'S MOST OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

THE AUTHOR

(3)

PSALM cxyiii, 23, 24,

*This is the Lord's doing—We will rejoice
and be glad in it.*

“* **A**LMIGHTY God has blessed
“ his Majesty's Arms, in the late
“ Battle, by a great Victory over the
“ Fleet of the Enemy.” He has
thus extended § “ a Reviving to
“ the Nations of the Earth;” And
that they may “*repair* the Desolati-
“ on thereof,† “ He has given them
“ a *wall* in Judah.”

What then does this Nation owe to
Providence, who has made its NAVAL
walls an instrument of Deliverance to
suffering Humanity? We owe at least
a Sincere and a Solemn Thanksgiving.

As a part of our work of gratitude,
I shall endeavour to vindicate a Sub-

*Lord Nelson's official Letter on his Victory.

§† Ezra, ix. 9.

lime truth, by shewing first that *there is a Providence*, in opposition to his enemies, for '*this is the Lord's Doing.*' And next, that we may "rejoice and be glad in it," I shall submit to you a mode of *permanent* Thanksgiving.

There is no perfection of the Deity, which has been more exposed to the contradictions of men, than his Divine Providence. *Some* of the Hea-then Philosophers doubted upon this point formerly. And *all* the *Atheistical* Philosophers reject it to day: because they desire no conductor, no controller but their passions.

Others there are, worldly Politicians, who form grand enterprises, and flatter themselves that their projects will succeed, through industry,

*Note. That the *wisest* and *best* of the Antient Philosophers believed in Providence, we believe will not be disputed. We shall therefore state the opinion of but one—

"Quod si melius geruntur, ea quæ consilio,
 "quam quæ sine consilio geruntur, nihil omni-
 "um rerum melius quam omnis mundus admini-
 "stratur, Consilio igitur mundus administratur."

CICERO lib. 2 de Invent.
 artifices

artifices, or intrigues, without any aid from Providence: and consequently without any confidence in his over-ruling Power. It is easy however to shew these men, the *truth* and *necessity* of a Providence.

For, no sooner does man cast his eyes over this vast Creation, to examine its stupendous parts, and to behold with what order and harmony the sublime whole moves, and has moved during ages, but he must confess, that this is neither *created* nor *conducted* by hazard. Upon the firmament of Heaven in all the shining characters of worlds, it is written there is an over-ruling Providence, who guides and governs all.

Were it otherwise, the* “ Sun when it shineth, and the Moon walking in brightness,” would soon sink into Cha-

^bNote. We beg leave also to state the opinions of the Antient Fathers upon this subject.

“ Mundi unus est rector, qui universa quæ sunt
“ verbo jubet, ratione dispensat, virtute con-
“ summat.”

CYPRIAN. *Serm. quod Idola non sint Deus.*

*Job xxxi. 26

os and Confusion. On this View of Worlds then, grand in Creation, orderly in movements, sublime and harmonious in their systems, let Atheists judge of the truth and necessity of a Providence.

But feeble are the lights of false Philosophers, and limited are the means of worldly Politicians. Should they require however, beside the "signs and wonders"† of Creation, other proofs of a Providence, what more convincing proofs can we place before them than their own best concerted enterprises, planned with all their wisdom, conducted with all their skill, backed with all their force, and *sunk*, like the armed Giant of Gath beneath the Champion of the Lord? "What other proof do they demand than when their towering ambition, like the aspiring Babel, becomes the source of misfortune?"

† John iv. 48.

*Note. "Miro modo fit, ut quod sine voluntate Dei agitur, voluntate Dei contrarium non fit, quia ejus consilio militant etiam quæ ejus consilio repugnant."

GREGOR, lib. 6. Moral.

If

If Opinion could add strength to the voice of nature and experience, upon the existence of Providence, to you Christians I should say "HE
 "has given his *Angels charge* over
 "you, to keep you in all your
 "ways." These are the words of the pious Psalmist, which to Infidels might have no weight: they are hardly to be taught by opinion or convinced by facts. Almighty Providence aware of such monstrous ingratitude, appeals against it in these words. * "Hear O Heavens, and give
 "ear O Earth, I have nourished and
 "brought up Children and they have
 "rebelled against me." In another place however, he menaces with his Justice those who will not acknowledge his Mercies. "† You have for-
 "saken me," says he, "and served
 "other Gods—go then and cry unto
 "the Gods which you have chosen,
 "let *them* deliver you in the time
 "of tribulation."

If in addition to arguments founded upon nature, experience, and reli-

*Isaiah

† Judges x. 13, 14.

gion, in support of the existence and Judgments of Providence, example were necessary, it abounds both in past and present times, in the case of individuals, and of Nations.

Perhaps one of the examples, which can make us best conceive the existence and judgments of Providence, we shall find recorded in the book of Exodus. It is the instance of the infant Moses, floating upon the Nile, in a basket of rushes, exposed by its Mother to the mercy of the waters rather than to the cruelties of Pharoah. But Providence took care of the boy: he was saved by the Daughter of Pharoah; was given to his own Mother to be nursed; was brought up in the palace of Pharoah; and was adopted by the Daughter of Pharoah. This child, notwithstanding all the murderous attempts of Pharoah, was the same who announced *his punishment*, in the death of all the first-born of Egypt, from his throne downward; nay was the same, through whom this cruel Pharoah and

and all his host perished in the Red-sea. Is there not then an avenging Providence? Let the Infidel examine the history of Noah—*there* are manifestations. Let him examine the history of Isaac—*there* he will find proofs. Let him contemplate the life of Jacob—all the events of which are but one continued chain of the *proofs* of Providence. Let him take a view also of the life of Joseph, persecuted by his brethren—doomed to death—fold for slavery—afterward accused of the blackest crimes—plunged into the horrors of a dungeon for those crimes—and then let him say if such events as persecution, slavery, and imprisonment for crimes, are the common road to splendid elevation near a throne. There is most assuredly a PROVIDENCE above us, who makes exaltation spring out of innocent abasement.

But we have *proofs* of Providence, not only in the lives of Individuals, but in the care of each living object of Creation; not only in the animal but in the vegetable world.

Astonished

Astonished at the little confidence of man while every living creature instructed him upon Providence, our Saviour exclaimed “ * O ye of little faith ! ” He desired men to behold convictions of the exactitude of Providence, in the birds of the air and flowers of the field. “ And are not ye, ” said he, “ much better than they ? ”

Yet Mankind murmurs ; and proceeds even to doubts that there can be a Providence, — where there is such *Inequality of conditions* — Such splendor and such poverty !^d Wonderful

* Matt. vi. 26, 30.

“ Note. “ Sit homo qui esse debet, mox ei addentur omnia per quem facta sunt omnia.”

HIERONYM. in cap 6 Matt.

“ De divina miseratione tunc sperandum amplius est, cum præsidia humana defecerint.”

AMBROS. in Heseam.

The opinion of Antients and Moderns ought surely to have some weight upon those Men, who pretend to be Philosophers and resist a *Particular Providence*. How absurd is the position that Providence consigned himself, after the Creation to a species of Epicurean ease (*απραξία*)

Secret—or rather manifest and positive proof that there is an over-ruling Providence. For without this inequality, the world would soon languish, and all be in confusion. Had *all* an equality of power—none would obey. Had all an equality of wealth, none would be industrious. And where then would man find succour? But *our* views are particular: and no man looks beyond personal advantage. Whereas the views of Providence are universal, and the Almighty looks to the good of the *whole*. His Providence keeps

ἀγαθὸς ὡν εἰ παύσεται ἀγαθὸ ἐργῶν,
καὶ τὸ θεὸς εἶναι παύσεται.

CLEM. ALEX. S. 6. pag. 4923.

“ C’est attaquer Dieu la dans souveraineté de son
“ être, que de prétendre, en quoique soit,
“ censurer sa conduite et sa Providence.”

BOURDALOUE.

“ Wenn etwas die menschlichen kräfte weit
“ übersteigt, so kann man mit sicherheit urthei-
“ len, dals es durch eine höhere Kraft gewirkt
“ werde.”

ALBERTI.

“ *Note. “ Cura tua, cura hominis est:
Deus autem de omnibus cura est.”

CHRYSOST. Homil. sup. Matt.

all the parts of Society in Union and action by mutual subordination: by the diversity of States and conditions; by the opposition of indigence and abundance; by the need which the great have of the assistance of the little—by the want which the little have of the succor of the great: by the law which God has prescribed to the high, to exercise protection and charity toward the low, and by his laws to the low, to exercise industry and obedience to the high. And let man be assured, that however unequal their conditions may appear, the weight and measure of human happiness, is much *more* equal than he imagines. The splendor of rank and riches, by no means, determine the portion of human happiness. For, the peasant may sleep, as it were, amidst the balm of Roses, while the pillow of the Prince is planted thick with thorns. The balance of human happiness is indeed wonderfully *equal*. And the disproportion of condition is most clearly necessary. For, from this wise variety, results that sublime

lime and beautiful chord of harmony, which unites civilized men for mutual happiness.

Unfortunately however through an immoral pestilence maddening the human mind, a part of the race of men would wreck and dissolve this sublime system. The merciful hand of Providence, however, has raised up in *this* Nation, as it were, a Divine Spirit to stay the progress of Desolation—THANKS BE TO ALMIGHTY GOD! He has shewn to the enemies of humanity, that * “ the battle is *not* to the strong.” A Victory so marked in its manner, so *difficult* in its means, so *glorious* in its issue as to lose by description and not gain by panegyrick, proves that *such* “ safety is only of the Lord.” § But more than glorious is the *human instrument* of that power of God, for the *Deliverance* of Nations.—His ACTIONS, ALONE can praise him—Who *triumphed* not more over his

* Eccl. ix. 11

§ Prov. xxi. 31.

enemies by his valor, than over his valor by his modesty—Who triumphed over the world, and all its vanity, and all its errors, by a piety at once simple and sublime. Such is **THE CHRISTIAN HERO!**—who never forgot his God, and whose God never forgot him. The blows of Death lost all their force in approaching him, and have left upon him, but **MARKS** of his **COURAGE**, and of the **PROTECTION** of **HEAVEN**. *These are the proofs* of a Divine Providence.

But in addition to the foregoing arguments founded upon nature, experience, religion, reason, and the examples of individuals, let us now pass to the examples of Nations.

When we contemplate the fate of fallen Nations, Nineveh, Babylon and Egypt: When we look round upon the wrecks of Europe to-day: When we behold the infuriate victims of Disorder pluck the sword from the bowels of their own nation, to plunge it into those of others; When we listen to the cries, amidst Rebellion at
out

our doors, sickening the heart of humanity for a sister Kingdom; When we survey all this, and then look to the security, the glory of this Nation, amidst universal conflagration, every Soul must glow with gratitude to a Protecting God. But what gratitude do we not owe for our Civil and Religious blessings—for laws, whereby the hair of the poorest man's head cannot be injured with impunity, by the most powerful—for Religion, free from idolatry and superstition either to degrade or enslave the mind of man? Let us for such *distinguished marks* of the *favor of Providence*, resolve upon *permanent Thanksgiving* — by REFORMATION—by the gratitude of our *lives*, instead of a day—of our actions more than our words.

RELIGION offers the first point for Reformation. It is with peculiar pain we must remark at this moment, that it is too much disregarded by the high, disgraced by the low, and degraded by its Teachers. Yet without Religion, every Nation, every man is lost. It is peculiarly incumbent therefore

upon the Ministers of God's word, to set an example by their actions. It is highly incumbent also upon the Great, not to strip Religion of its sanctity, for the indulgence of frivolous pleasures. They should wisely remember, that the Great day of the Lord, is to manifest a sense of *HIS Divine authority*, and our public obedience; that it ought not to be converted into a day of crime and disobedience, by violating the laws of the Land and Religion, and by prophaning it with all the rioting of a Bacchanalian festival, gambling and dissipation.* The Great should be the guardians and Instructors of mankind. But if they corrupt the *low* by their examples; if they make their *Domestics*, ministers of their vices; they thus prepare both for the execution of crimes.

PUBLIC MANNERS also are entitled to attention. For if *Religion* be

*The two Sermons of that able and truly Christian Philosopher, Bishop Porteus, on the "*Observation of the Lord's Day and The immoderate love of Diversions inconsistent with the Duties of a Christian*," should in an Age like the present be the *Manual of Families*.

our

our Charter for *Heaven*, National manners are our shield upon Earth. Without morals no Nation can last long. Let us *beware* then, that the characteristic and dignified manners of our Nation be not corrupted by FOREIGN poison. If we liberalize our respectable moral customs for the *glittering immorality* of FRENCH *fashions*, the MANNERS of that Nation will prove more dangerous than their ARMS.

Such examples soon extend. And the shade of immorality always deepens as it extends. Thus dazzling Dissipation in the higher classes becomes destructive pleasure in the subordinate ranks. Through imitative† amusements, the middling order tumbles into indigence, from indigence into fraud, bankruptcy and ruin. And the lowest classes, sanctioned and inflamed by the examples of their Superiors, hurry into debauch, disregard of law, sedition and all its crimes. Above

† The admirable Sermon of Dr. Rennel on Gaming, cannot be perused too often, by all Ranks.

all, how dreadful is this example, this poison of mind and manners, if administered through a Parent to the Child.

Before I conclude, permit me to address the younger part of my Congregation, some of whom I perceive* have taken up arms. It is your peculiar lot, my young brethren, to be reserved for an age convulsed by the consequences of immorality. The whole frame of human affairs is disturbed: you come forward in a period, the most momentous that ever engaged human thought or action. The awful events, about you, render your state important above your years. You are destined to meet the effects of that shock, which the *moral world* has undergone. It is therefore upon *your* wisdom, *your* virtue, and *your* fortitude, that the liberties, the religion, the happiness

*The attendance of the gentlemen of the Armed Association, of St. George's Hanover-Square, was a circumstance of which the Preacher had not been apprised before Divine Service.

§ See an admirable Discourse preached by the Rev. Wm. Magee before the University of Dublin.

of

of your Country *must* in part depend. Shew to the world then that you are formed to command, by commanding yourselves. Shew to the *low*, that there is an high sentiment in submission. Teach even those above you in rank or years, that Youth at least is open to the awful lesson of the Age. Shew them, that wisdom renders men dignified without station, and venerable without years. And let *All* see that wisdom, in your moral and dignified support of the laws, civil, and religious. Thus my Young brethren display to your aged friends the *rising wisdom* and *virtues of Britain*, amidst this wreck of things. Thus console these virtuous men, who guarded your infant years, and who now, trembling on the brink of their grave casting back their anxious looks upon their COUNTRY and upon you. Feel then, my young Friends, how *much* this nation depends upon the fortitude of its sons. Religion will teach you fortitude,-- that pious magnanimity which does not fear Death, but makes the warrior SURPASS himself, and will render you INVINCIBLE.

May

May you then, and may we all be inspired by this Religion, to manifest, each man in his station, our duty, and *Permanent Thanksgiving* to Providence. Let us offer up for the innumerable blessings of Government, Laws, Liberty, and the Protection of Providence, the **THANKSGIVING**, of *Actions* more than of *Words*, of our *Lives* rather than of a *Day*.

Let each man blest with talents devote them to the God of *Truth*, by instructing and reforming the misguided. Let those elevated to *Power* consecrate it to the *honor* of Providence, by rewarding *virtue* and *merit*. Let those enjoying *riches* offer them to the *Great Giver* of all things, by consoling the needy and unfortunate, and peculiarly the widows and orphans of those men who have sacrificed their lives for our safety. By this system of permanent thanksgiving, prest upon you by every argument human and Divine, prest upon you by every consideration temporal and eternal, prest upon you by all that is dear to man and sacred

to

to God, I doubt not, that while you
are securing the *protection*, the *existence*,
the *good* of your Country, you will
secure to *yourselves* the GLORY of AN
ADMIRING GOD.

F I N I S

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